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NEWS RELEASE

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**Joint Committee on Business Competitiveness
Concludes Following 8 Successful Hearings**

Testimony received from business leaders to be forwarded to Legislature

(LANSING) – Proceeding eight statewide hearings that focused on testimony from dozens of community business leaders and economic development professionals, the Joint Committee on Business Competitiveness announced it will prepare a legislative report making recommendations on how the state can increase its business climate and visibility.

“Over the past three months the Joint Committee on Business Competitiveness received a tremendous amount of testimony from businesses large and small, and from communities of all sizes – all giving insight to Michigan’s current business climate and how it can be improved to compete nationally and internationally,” said state Sen. Alan Sanborn, co-chairman of the committee. “I would like to extend my thanks to those who testified and to all the businesses who welcomed us into their facilities. The information obtained will be invaluable in helping us to compile legislative recommendations for keeping Michigan amongst the nation’s most competitive business states.”

The Joint Committee on Business Competitiveness was created in January by Senate Majority Leader Ken Sikkema, R-Wyoming, and House Speaker Rick Johnson, R-LeRoy, to look at ways to make Michigan’s business climate more competitive with other states and foreign countries and to study the issues affecting Michigan’s economy. The committee will make its report to the Legislature by Sept. 1, 2003.

“I really enjoyed the opportunity to meet with community and business leaders from throughout the state to hear their ideas on what can be done to keep Michigan’s economy moving in the right direction,” said state Rep. Clark Bisbee, co-chairman of the committee. “It was interesting to hear how different the challenges are in border counties vs. the Upper Peninsula vs. growing communities. There were also many similar business problems like the Single Business Tax and the rising costs associated with health care that were consistent throughout the committee’s travels. We now have many ideas that can be implemented by the state to help small local businesses prosper.”

The committee began its hearings March 10 in Novi with subsequent meetings taking place in Grand Rapids, Traverse City, Escanaba, Macomb County, Battle Creek, Saginaw and Monroe County.

Spanning a three-month period, the committee took testimony from more than 150 community business leaders, economic development professionals and mom and pop-small business owners. Among issues that were of major concern to businesses were: the Single Business Tax, research and development tax credits, health insurance costs, work force training and competing with neighboring states with lower taxes.

(MORE)

Those giving testimony ranged from such large corporations and associations as Ford Motor Company, General Motors, the Michigan Chamber of Commerce, Grand Rapids Chamber of Commerce, Detroit Regional Chamber of Commerce, Michigan Manufacturers Association, Michigan Association of Home Builders, Oakland County Planning and Economic Department, National Federation of Independent Businesses and the Small Business Association of Michigan – to smaller businesses such as Slasor Heating and Cooling, Inc., Tool-Dex, Wright-K Technology, Lapeer County Bank and Trust and M2M Manufacturing.

Prior to the hearings, committee members were provided an opportunity to see firsthand how local plants and manufacturing companies operated. Members toured Automation Alley in Oakland County, GR Spring and Stamping and Jedco Inc. in Grand Rapids, an M-Tech Center in Traverse City, Meadwestvaco Papers in Escanaba, Romeo Engine Plant in Macomb County, Denso Manufacturing in Battle Creek, U.S. Farathane and Saginaw Metal Casting Operations in Saginaw and Visteon in Milan.

“Touring local businesses and operations provided committee members with a firsthand view of what businesses are doing to stay competitive, and what they need from the Legislature to become more competitive,” said Sanborn. “Their recommendations will be extremely valuable to us as we put together our report and recommendations for the Legislature.”

Committee members will forward their report to the Legislature by Sept. 1, where ideas and policies will be presented seeking measures that will make Michigan’s businesses more competitive on a worldwide scale.

Sen. Sanborn encourages businesses and those interested in the economic climate of Michigan to forward written copies of testimony to his office at P.O. Box 30036, Lansing MI 48909.

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**Editor’s Note: A downloadable photograph of the Joint Committee on Business Competitiveness is available on the Senate Majority Photowire at:
<http://www.senate.michigan.gov/gop/photowire/Index.htm>**